

APRIL HEALTH TIP

This month features information about alcoholism, as April is Alcohol Awareness Month. This observance began in 1987 by The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence in order to educate others about the disease of alcoholism and to highlight the fact that it is a treatable disease, not a moral weakness, and that alcoholics are capable of recovery.

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is a disease that includes the following four symptoms:

- **Craving**—refers to having a strong need, or urge, to drink.
- **Loss of control**—is defined as the inability to stop drinking once drinking has begun.
- **Physical dependence**—is characterized by withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after one has stopped drinking and
- **Tolerance**—means that greater amounts of alcohol must be consumed in order to achieve the same effect.

A drink is commonly defined as one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits. For most adults, moderate alcohol use--up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people--causes few if any problems.

However, certain people should not drink at all. Those groups include:

- Women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- People who plan to drive or engage in other activities that require alertness and skill
- People taking certain over-the-counter or prescription medications
- People with medical conditions that can be made worse by drinking
- Recovering alcoholics and
- People younger than age 21.

There are a few questions you can ask to help you find out if you or a loved one has a drinking problem:

- Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
- Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?
- Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?

One "yes" answer suggests a possible alcohol problem. More than one "yes" answer means it is highly likely that a problem exists. If you think that you or someone you know might have an alcohol problem, it is important to see a health care provider right away. Most find that a healthy recovery from alcoholism is achieved by reaching out to others for help.

The Frederick County Health Department provides substance abuse services. For more information call: 301-600-1775 for questions about adult services and 301-600-3294 for the adolescent program.

References:

“A family history of alcoholism: Are you at risk?” National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAA), NIH, August 2005,
<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/FamilyHistory/famhist.htm>

“Alcoholism: Getting the facts.” NIAA, NIH, 2001,
http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/GettheFacts_HTML/facts.htm **

“FAQs for the General Public.” NIAA, NIH. From
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/FAQs/General-English/>

“Quick stats: General information on alcohol use and health.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, June 2, 2006,
http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/quickstats/general_info.htm

**The NIAA has temporarily removed this brochure from their website for updating. Listed below is a document based upon this publication:

“Alcoholism getting the facts.” From
<http://psychiatry.mc.duke.edu/CMRIS/ED/EDpdf/ALCOHOLISM.pdf>